

British Apolobamba 2009

MEF – 09/30



26th July – 24th August 2009

'The compilers of this report and the members of the expedition agree that all or part of it may be copied for the purposes of private research.'

British Apolobamba 2009

The 2009 British Apolobamba Expedition would like to thank:

- The Mount Everest Foundation for helping to fund the expedition
- Dr Heather Druett for Medical advice and help with supplying drugs for the expedition
- Kennedys Pharmacy Dunoon for supplying Iodine and obtaining all the drugs
- Sandra Graham Interiors for supplying silk and muslin for filtering fuel and water
- Librarians at Sheffield City Library
- Bolivian Journeys and John Biggar
- The Travel Centre, West Street Sheffield

Everyone who supplied help and information to the Expedition

Background

As the summer came to a close in 2008, the idea of planning an Expedition to South America was talked about on the way home from a crag. Although the country had not yet been decided, there was healthy debate for the next few weeks. Economics and political stability lead to Bolivia being the choice for the 2009 Expedition.

After looking through Expedition reports in the Alan Rouse Memorial Library in Sheffield, we decided that the Apolobamba was the area that we wanted to go to, due to its remoteness and the opportunity to climb unclimbed peaks.

For every member of the team this was the first trip to the greater ranges and we planned to climb in alpine style, in pairs, leaving as little impact as possible on the area visited.

Expedition Members

Kris Hill

Kris is a 34 year old Activity Instructor and lives in Dunoon Argyll. He has been climbing since he was 18 and in this time he has climbed all over the UK in summer and winter. He has also made several trips to the Alps, Norway and the United States.



Adrian Dye

Adrian is a 25 year old geography teacher and lives in Barnsley. He has been climbing since he was 16 and in this time he has climbed all over the UK in summer and winter with several new routes in the Lake District and Scotland to his credit. He has also made several trips to the Alps and Norway.



Simon Wyatt

Simon is a 35 year old IT consultant and lives in South Yorkshire. He has been climbing since he was 18 and in this time he has climbed all over the UK in summer. He has also made several trips to the Alps in the summer.



Matt Griffin

Matt is a 30 year old primary teacher and lives in Sheffield. He has been climbing since he was 16 and in this time he has climbed all over the UK in summer and winter with several new routes in the Lake District and Scotland to his credit. He has also made several trips to the Alps during the summer.



Trip Objectives

To explore the Apolobamba range located on the Northern tip of the Bolivian Andes. Focusing on the climbing of:

- new British first ascents of unclimbed peaks over 5000 meters, and
- new routes on previously climbed peaks.

Supporting objectives:

- climb some smaller peaks for acclimatization purposes
- try new approaches to the mountains
- make a photographic record for lecturing and website use and identify other mountain peaks in the area for future expeditions

Main objective

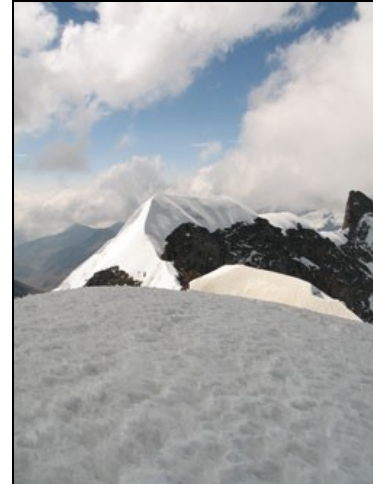
'Rock Peak'

Latitude: 15°01'10"

Longitude: 69°01'37"

Apolobamba

Accessed from the east from via road head at
Piedra Grande



Research

The main research for the trip was conducted through MEF Expedition reports and some Alpine Club journals. Although some of this can be obtained through the Internet, We used the Alan Rouse Memorial library based in the Sheffield Central Library.

The librarians were exceptionally helpful in searching for any back copies of magazines or books requested. There is also a photocopier available in the Library. We also used two guide books purchased here in the UK.

Maps

The guide books contain reasonable sketch maps, but the most useful map of the Apolobamba is the “Paul Hudson Map” available from the RGS. This is based on a 1913 British survey of the area. We were unable to get hold of more detailed maps while we were in Bolivia. We also used Google Earth but unfortunately the area we visited lay out with the High Resolution satellite area. We would recommend purchasing an up to date satellite image, if possible, in future.

Guidebooks

The guidebooks we used were:

Bolivia A Climbing Guide: Yossi Brain. Published by Cordee 1999 ISBN 1-871890-48-9

The Andes, A guide for Climbers 3rd Edition: John Biggar. Published by Andes 2005 ISBN 0-9536087-2-7

Permissions and Permits

30 day visas for Bolivia are granted to British citizens upon arrival. This can be easily increased to 90 days free of charge if required. Current information is available in ‘The Lonely Planet Guide book’ or from the British or Bolivian Consulates.

Climbing permits are currently not required for climbing in Bolivia.

We did have to pay a small charge for the Condoriri base camp. This was based on the number of people in our group(just like a camp site fee).

Finances

	Individual	Group total
Flights	990	3,960

BMC Insurance	230	920
Transport with in Bolivia	150	600
Food/fuel	100	400
Hotels	200	800
Exit Tax	25	100
Expenditure	1695	6780
Income		770
Total Expenditure	1502	6010

Grants

Mount Everest Foundation supplied us with a grant of £770 towards the cost of our expedition

Food

We took some food from the UK to Bolivia which enabled us to only require to use of the local markets in La Paz, where you can obtain nearly everything you might need. We would recommend bringing zip lock bags for breaking food down in to manageable sizes for carrying.

To obtain our food plan for the Apolobamba we tried lots of different things in Condoriri so that we could select only what we wanted for our expedition. This also gave us an idea of how long things took to cook. Our most prized food purchases were tangerines which were easy to peel and contained some liquid that did not need to be pumped.

Food brought from UK

- Cereal Bars
- Boiled sweets
- Cuppa Soups
- Packets of savoury rice
- Chocolate
- Powerbars (purchased in USA , whilst in transit)
- Tea bags

All of the food listed above was worth bringing but if we could only bring three items from the list above they would be the cuppa soups, tea bags and the cereal bars.

Cooking equipment

We purchased a pressure cooker cheaply in La Paz. This helped with the boiling of water for cooking and drinking. We also bought a few basic utensils to make life easier at base camp.

We used two multi fuel stoves and two gas stoves. We filtered petrol for the multi fuel stoves which worked well whilst in Condoriri but in the Apolobamba the MSR and Primus multi fuel stoves both failed even with cleaning on a regular basis. Unfortunately, this left us with only our gas stoves and enough gas for two days.

Water

When not in the mountains we drank only bottled water and used this for cleaning our teeth as well.

In the mountains we:

- Filtered water with an MSR filter which worked well and connected on to the top of a Nalgeen bottle
- Boiled water in the pressure cooker for cleaning
- Treated water with tincture of Iodine (soon getting used to the taste!)

This worked well in Condoriri and the Apolobamba but there was a large amount of sediment in the water, which we had to pre filter before using the MSR filter. We would suggest bring two water filters as it takes a long time to filter just one litre of water.

Communications

The only communication devices we took with us were a set of two way radios which we used with small success (mainly to see if they would work). Bolivia now has a network of payphones in small villages that use a phone card.

We were lucky enough to enlist the help of some local boys to show us how to use the phone when we needed to make call when the stoves failed, but nearest phone was five hours walk.

In La Paz has all the communication facilities of any European city and as a tourist you can access the internet for free at several locations.

Language

If you can speak Spanish you will have no problems in Bolivia. The Spanish used in Bolivia is much slower than Spain and easy to understand so take the time to learn some before you go and take a phrase book.

Also in La Paz some people speak English but the use of very basic Spanish will still help.

Medical Advice

We took advice on inoculations and from our GP's and the Lonely Planet guide. These included: Rabies Typhoid and Yellow Fever. Rabies was optional but would be recommended as there were a lot of dogs wandering in the hills we visited.

Acclimatisation

We all took our own approach to acclimatisation. This was not a very scientific method, but we think that no one method fits all for short trips. We did find out that the worry of not being acclimatised is can just as bad as mild altitude sickness!

We flew from the UK to La Paz which immediately took us to the highest Airport in the world. We then acclimatised over the next couple of days by:

- sorting money and supplies in La Paz the day we arrived.
- A day trip on to the Alto Plano taking us above 4000m
- A day trip to the highest ski centre world which took us up to 5000m. Fortunately for us the bus could not make it up the road because of the snow and ice so we were able to walk up to help us get acclimatised.

We then went to the Condoriri to acclimatise where some team members had some sickness and tiredness from the altitude after climbing the first route Pequeno Alpamayo (5410m). They took a rest from climbing the next day at the base camp (4700m) and they improved and were able to climb again the following day. We learnt the lesson that we were not in the Alps and thereafter we took it at a slower pace proving more productive for the team.

Two of the team members used Diamox tablets but gave up before finishing the course as they needed to urinate a lot and could feel the side effects from the tablets.

One member of the team used a variation on the Don Whillains method but never stopped smoking unfortunately *for all the health advice we are normally given this method did not hold him back*. But it did not encourage any of us to take up smoking!

What we did find is that if you drink plenty and eat regularly this will help, but being the fittest is not necessarily the answer either. The best plan is to work together and look after each other because the altitude sickness can creep up on you as even when you are resting at altitude.

First Aid

We were trained first aiders and Kris took additional training from Dr Heather Druett (GP) in giving injections and using prescribed drugs before going to Bolivia. We obtained drugs from our GP's before flying to Bolivia and had no problem with customs at any airports.

Drugs

Drugs and use listed below:

Ciprofoxacin – For severe diarrhoea or urine infections

Coamoxiiclav – For chest or skin or urine infections

Amethecaine eye drops – For snow blindness

Dioralyte – Rehydration sachets

Methrodizole – For gut infections/parasites

Climbing Equipment

The whole team used modern leather winter mountaineering boots throughout the whole trip with some of the team wearing these on the flight out to save weight in their baggage allowance.

As we were climbing in two pairs we sorted our rack between us and we took out with us:

- 10 extenders of varied length
- 1 set of mixed nuts and rocks
- 3 Hexes
- 8 ice screws
- 5 Slings
- Deadman (never used)
- 2 x 8.1 60m half rope
- 1 x 9.1 60m single rope
- Abseil tat about 15m of different thickness

Purchased in Bolivia

- 2 MSR snow stakes



Clothing

During our time in Condiriri we experienced amazingly good weather which enabled us to be able to climb in soft-shell and fleece style clothing. During the evening we wore down jackets and went to bed before we got cold.

When in the Apolobamba the weather settled out after snowing the first night. We had clear mornings most days with the mist rolling in everyday at 13.30. This meant that we had to use water proofs and stay in our tents most of the day after coming back from climbing. Due to the dampness it always felt cold.

Camping Equipment

We took two main tents for sleeping and eating. A Terra-Nova Quasar and a large Vango tent with a porch for cooking and eating. This proved to be quite sociable in the Apolobamba when we had to spend large amount of times inside the tents.

We all took Therma rests and down sleeping bags equivalent to Mountain Equipment Icelines which were more than sufficient during the trip.

Photography

All members of the team took their own digital cameras. We had small problems with battery life, but we all managed to resist the temptation to look at the shots whilst out in base camp. Digital compact cameras offered the opportunity to take shots when ever wanted. while the Digital SLR was good for taking shots from base camps and summits but was difficult to use while out on the hill. We also had a small Digital Video camera to capture comments through the trip.

Risks and Hazards

Risks in the mountains

The risks in the mountains would include the drinking and cooking with water from streams, particularly when we were tired. To avoid this risk we treated the water with tincture of Iodine and filtered it with a MSR water filter. We also split non treated water bottles and treated water on different sides of the mess

tent to ensure no mistakes were made as it would have been very hard to rehydrate someone with diarrhoea.

The Mountaineering risks included poor snow conditions, glacier travel, stone fall and climbing early mornings in the dark. We reduced these risks by all

having past experience of climbing in different conditions and having practiced rescue skills before leaving for Bolivia. We ensured we had enough torch batteries and changed them before they ran out. We picked the best lines to avoid stone fall and unfortunately had to make the decision to not climb our main objective due to the poor quality of the rock.

On routes, we ensured we climbed fast enough to get back before the mist rolled in everyday and that we all knew what retreat route we would use. In the back of our mind we knew that there would be no possibility of outside rescue so we ensured that we did not take any unnecessary risks.

Risk of Travel

No matter where you go there is always the risk of being robbed and on our way out to Bolivia we found a cheap Motel room to stay in over night whilst we were in Miami. This ensured we could get some sleep and not have to worry about our kit.

Whilst in Bolivia we felt safe, but you should still take the usual precautions whilst travelling and keep the amounts of money you are carrying to minimum and do not make obvious cameras and phones.

As a westerner you will be approached and asked if you would like to buy any drugs and our advice would be polite and say no and keep walking. They will not follow you or hassle you we found, when they are on the main streets with all the main tourist hotels.

We used the auto tellers in La Paz to take out money and we took turns to do this and used it for the whole group. We kept a record in the back of a note book who owed what. This reduced the banking charges.



Political situation in Bolivia

Bolivia's social and political fronts have been in constant change since the appointment of the country's first indigenous president Evo Morales in 2006. Optimism is generally high, especially among the poor majority, and many changes are afoot. Protests, marches and demonstrations are a perpetual.

The new president has started a program of wealth redistribution from the cities to people living in the rural areas. He has introduced new telephones, town squares and fresh water to rural areas. Bolivia is controlled by regional governors who support the President. Before our trip there was a vote held, and the president managed to obtain a majority vote. This enabled us to visit Bolivia.

As far as we could see as outsiders, the President is doing a good job for his people and we were lucky that he had overseen the installation of a telephone system that we could use when our stoves broke down!

Travel

After trying to look for flights on the internet using different search engines and methods it proved impossible to book the complete trip. Therefore we used, The Travel Centre, in Sheffield.

We contacted them by telephone and told them what we were planning to do and that we would have a large amount of baggage. They phoned back the next day with a list of options.

We chose to fly through USA as we could then fly from Manchester and the standard baggage allowance was 60 Kg. We paid for our flights individually over the phone and we received an itinerary, initially by post and the tickets at a later date.

We flew with American Airlines from Manchester to Philadelphia and then on to Miami before departing for Bolivia. Unfortunately, there was a lightning storm which kept us on the run-way in Philadelphia for four hours making, us miss our connecting flight to Bolivia. We were put on the next flight but it meant we had to stay in Miami for the night which cost us 50 US Dollars for a room for four.

On arrival in Bolivia we were picked up by "Bolivian Journeys" who had sorted out our hotel accommodation in La Paz and our travel to Condoriri and the Appolobamba. This company had been recommended to us by John Biggar and they did not let us down during the trip.

Travel in Bolivia

Whilst travelling in Bolivia we used mini vans to get to our locations. These vans seemed to cope with all terrains, but some times required some pushing to get up sections of roads.

Travel to the Apolobamba

We travelled to the Apolobamba in a Mini van from La Paz. The Journey took around 15 Hours in total to get through El Alto and on to the highway we continued on across roads of varying quality until we left civilisation completely. Using our map we navigated for our driver by picking out the valleys between mountains before relocating using lakes and rivers.

We then headed up a mountain pass and out in to open country hopping to find the Village of Illo Illo and then on to Piedra Grande. We were unable to get any donkeys so we then had to rely on our legs for transport there after.

There was a bus to from La Paz to Illo Illo but we would have struggled to get our kit on to the bus and they would probably not of let us take our rubbish home from the Apolobamba. Also it would have taken several days to get to our destination.

We were visited by a shepherd whilst at our base camp who we conversed with in Spanish. He said were first people to climb in this area and that we were welcome.

Environment

Everything we took to the Apolobamba we brought back to La Paz to dispose of, including toilet paper. We took all batteries back home and gave any left over petrol to the driver. Our pressure cooker and utensils were given to a member of the hotel staff.



Expedition Log

26th July – 28th July

Manchester to La Paz – Bad weather kept us on the runway in USA

29th July – 30th July

Acclimatization and stores shopping

Friday 31st July

Walked to Condoriri base camp, mules and transport were impeccably organised. I felt quite wasted on arrival, so I set to building a stone windbreak for my tent. This made me feel even more ill and wasted, I recovered a bit at bedtime.

Saturday 1st August – 6th August

Acclimatization Condoriri range climbed everyday with some team members taking days res days to help Acclimatize we did feel the effects of climb to high to fast. But rest and water seemed to help.

Friday 7th August

Stores shopping for new found favourite foods

Saturday 8th August

“For those who are prepared to endure the journey to the Apolobamba there remain many new routes to do.” Good quote Yossi, endure is the right word regarding the journey, I have no idea how the bus driver got the bus over some of the passes. The passes were largely constituted of dirt track road one vehicle wide, his driving skill was awesome. Camped by the road, it snowed overnight.

Sunday 9th August

And I thought Sundays were a day of rest... on the grounds that about 4 people lived in the nearest village (Piedra Grande) and none of them appeared to have any donkeys, we decided to hump all our gear up to base camp. This necessitated a double carry each. I could hardly move by the end of the second carry. A combination of high altitude and not enough food made us all totally wasted. We just about managed to summon the energy to cook, late, at 7pm. It gets dark at 6.30, being near the equator, so this leads often to hours of laying around in the dark in the early evening, I'm getting bored of this aspect of Andean life and shan't miss it.

Monday 10th August

Monday is the new Sunday, a day of resting, preparing equipment and pumping water is in order. Ad lost his crampons yesterday so he's gone to look back down the path for them. No snowy climbs if he can't find them. I offered to lend him mine on alternate days if he can't find them. He thinks a local nicked them. Given the state we were in yesterday, who knows, but I hope they turn up. It's a sunny day so far, great views of the peaks around us – we hope to try a nearby rock peak tomorrow to make a 1st ascent and to check out the lay of the land a bit.

It has taken all day to pump the required amount of water, this is tedious already, I've no idea how it will feel in 9 days time when we are picked up.

We are planning on going for a reconnaissance trip around the valley tomorrow and maybe take in an unclimbed (?) rock peak. Ad spotted a good line up an unclimbed 5600m rock peak in the next valley over, fortunately the peak is all rock as he didn't manage to find his crampons.

Tuesday 11th August

The trackies are off, the leggings are on, it must be nearly time to climb a big peak. Today made the possible 1st ascent of a rock peak near camp, height 5255m, climbed the East ridge, it was chossy, disgusting and about F+ in grade. Tomorrow Ad and Kris are going to try a rock spur behind camp and the day after Simon and I are going to try a new route on a peak called Canisaya, then I'm going to lend Ad my crampons so he can try a new ice route on the following day (14th). All this presumes the weather keeps to it's current pattern of fine mornings then turning crap between 1 and 3pm.

It's 3.30pm, I'm wearing most of my clothes and I'm lying in my sleeping bag boiling the big pan up with washing up liquid to clean it, dark in 3 hours, fun.

Now it is 16.50, been pumping water for 30 mins or so, managed to get 700ml so now we have 8L. When we are climbing we need 5L/day each including a bit from food, so climbing as pairs on alternate days is cutting down the water requirements. Tomorrow is Simon and I's turn to pump while the other 2 climb the rock route.

Wednesday 12th August

Today I am sitting around camp while Ad and Kris climb new and Simon does reconnaissance for our attempt tomorrow on Canisaya. If we are successful it will be the 3rd ascent ever, hopefully we can find a new route up.

Kris and Ad did a new rock route Rock Ridge finishing below summit PD+ "Wompa Ridge", about PD+ in difficulty, they seemed to think it was pretty good. Simon's recce revealed a feasible way up the N face of Canisaya so I'm looking forward to trying that tomorrow. Now we are in my tent doing the traditional afternoon activities of pumping water and mending stoves.

EVENING

Stove mending failed so tomorrow Kris and Ad are off to see if they can get some decent fuel from Illo Illo, if no they are going to phone Marco to see if we can get picked up on the 16th instead of the 20th. We reckon we have enough gas to last until then. At least if we have to go earlier we could try a 6000m peak.

Thursday 13th August

Today Simon and I climbed a probable new route on Canisaya, about AD in difficulty. It was very hard work but also very good. Kris and Ad aren't back from their stove/phone mission yet so no news on the future yet. I had better pump some water before they arrive as they are bound to want some after a sweaty hike up from the valley. Pump pump pump. Maybe I'll have an orange 1st.

EVENING

We are being picked up at 8am the day after tomorrow. There was no fuel in Illo Illo. Ad and Kris are going to attempt Charquini tomorrow, which is the best looking peak around here, I hope they do it, it would be the 1st British ascent of the peak. Simon doesn't seem too bothered about having to go down in 2 days, don't know how the others are feeling about it.

Friday 14th August

We are resting and slowly packing everything up to go down to the road later today. We are due to be picked up at 8am, I hope the man turns up for us and that we have a safe journey back over the rather exciting roads. Basically the roads are potholed, narrow, dirt tracks for 3 hours, before 3 hours of wider dirt tracks before the last 3 hours are tarmacked. Ad and Kris failed on Charquini, apparently the glacier was full of holes and the climbing was much more technical than they thought from looking at the peak.

EVENING

The carry down this afternoon was brutal, it really hurt and getting up from sitting was a major challenge. I also put my hand in a cactus in an effort to stand up and was rewarded with a load of thorns in my hand. Fun times.

Saturday 15th August

We carry our kit to the road head at Piedra Grande and await our transport home.



Wednesday 19th - August Friday 21st

After leaving the Apolobamba early left us with option of extra hotel bills we had not budgeted for and we decided to go and climb Illimani. We purchased some gas for the stoves and took the public bus to Cohoni. We walked through the night to the first camp. The next day battered and bruised from the trek through the bushes we headed up to the Nido Condores camp(5450m) being passed by porters on the way down.

On arrival at the camp there was a guided group settling down to climb the mountain the next day. We pitched our tent and brewed up and chatted with the guides.

We were woken at 1 am by the group leaving to climb the Mountain we decided to sleep for another couple of hours then climb the mountain we summited just before 8 am. We managed to catch the only public bus of the day back to La Paz giving us a day to purchase some presents

Saturday 22nd – Tuesday 24th

Return to the UK on Tuesday 24th at 8 am

Routes

Ascent of Small new rock peak 5255m “Cherro” name supplied by a shepherd



We ascended this peak by the east ridge and although the rock was chossy in places it did finish at peak this was around F+ in grade

Ascent of Rock Ridge finishing below summit of “Cherro” PD+ “Wompa Ridge”



This was a good route that varied between steep corners knife edged aretes and long slabs which finished on a table of rock. We decided to name it after the Quechan name for table hence "Wompa Ridge".

3rd Ascent of Canisaya by new route on unclimbed North face AD+



This was a good route with steep climbing on good snow on the top pitches.

Failed ascent of Charquini by South West face



Adrain and I failed on the ascent of Charquini by the South West face due to the time it took us to pick our way across the glacier and the technical nature of the climbing .

If we had the time to return to the face we would could have traversed the glacier quickly and brought enough technical Ice gear with us to protect the pitches.

The climbing that we did was similar Scottish grade 4/5

Summary

The expedition was a first for all of us, in general the climbing is only a small part and the logistics are the key. Time spent learning basic Spanish before you leave for Bolivia will pay off as it spoken through out Bolivia and at a very slow pace compared to Spain.

Unfortunately for us we were let down by our multi fuel stoves even though they were cleaned everyday. But we still managed to climb in a valley were no-one had been before.

We Failed on the ascent of our main objective 'Rock peak' Latitude: 15°01'10" Longitude: 69°01'37" due to the condition of the peak and the fact that the snow band that could take us through the rubble section was not present. Although we did achieve the:

Ascent of Small new rock peak 5255m "Cherro" name supplied by Sheppard
Ascent of Rock Ridge finishing below summit of "Cherro" PD+ "Wompa Ridge"
3rd Ascent of Canisaya by new route on unclimbed North face AD+
Failed ascent of Charquini by South West face

Potential for new routes

The south west face of Chariquini has the potential for a number of great new long hard routes. The glacier is full of crevasses and makes a lot of noise. But the face has Ice chocked gullies, big open faces and mixed climbing. If we had not have had the problems with the stoves we would have gone back to this face everyday to try and get a line up it.

The west ridge of Chariquini also has the potential to offer a great long mountaineering route.

For more information you can contact Kris Hill 01369 706121

Scketch Map of location

