

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING GUIDE

Southwestern routes

LA JOYA-GRUPO DE LOS CIEN HUT

This is a 3-4 hour hike with an altitude gain of approximately 890m and a horizontal distance of about 5 km.

At La Joya, there is a yellow box where you will find the Socorro Alpino Mexicano registration book. Expeditions must provide the following information:

- club or company name
- number and names of hikers
- name of guide or person in charge
- emergency telephone number (including area code)
- date and time of expedition departure
- route to be followed
- estimated return date and time

You must sign out on the way down or else members of the rescue service will be searching for you in vain.

The route to the hut is divided into four sections, each of which is marked by a change of slope (sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left) at a small opening or port where the new section begins. These ports are called *portillos* and each one has a name.

Take the path that leads directly upwards and then makes a diagonal approach to the *Pies* (Feet) massif. The path, which may or may not be snow-covered, is well defined at all times, and crampons are not needed to get to the hut.

The first section can be covered in 45-60 minutes and ends at the spot designated *Anteportillo*. A false path then heads upward, but you want to take the one that descends slightly and then ascends, this time with the mountain on the left.

It takes about 45-60 minutes to walk through the second section, which ends at the *Portillo de la Guglia*, so named because it runs just above Guglia spire. It is easy to recognize because a blue metal box was placed there in memory of a young Canadian woman. (Although she didn't die there, her family chose the spot in her honor.) At this point the slope changes to the right side once again. The path to the next section doesn't start right there, but about 20 meters above. It is also the starting point of a route to the Feet, or Amacuilécatl.

After walking another 45-60 minutes you reach the end of the third section at the *Portillo de los Pies*. Another route starts there that leads to the Feet. As you continue to this summit of Iztaccíhuatl, the slope is on the left side.

A rock with a bull's-eye on it tells you that you are near the end of the fourth section. There is a path below this rock and another above it. You can take either one to get to a small hill. Go around the hill and on the back side you'll find the

Grupo de los Cien Hut, but it's practically invisible until you come within 100 meters of it.

Nearby, you can see the remains of the Igloo and República del Chile huts and a small altar. The spacious area is good for camping.

LA JOYA- AYOLOCO II HUT

Before setting out, you have to register at the Socorro Alpino Mexicano, described at the beginning of this section.

This route is a little more difficult than the other one because you must go down before you go up. Following the path is also more complicated, especially in the fog, because portions of it cross rocky terrain scarcely marked with piles of stones called "ducks," which may be difficult to see in the fog.

The route begins on a path behind the rescue box and descends to the Tlaltipitongo Valley, where there's a stream and some small waterfalls that can be seen from La Joya. The trail then leads upward on the other side. You pass an enormous stone where you can bivouac known as the *Boca de Tiburón* or Shark's Mouth, and you climb upwards alongside a rock wall to your left called Salto de la Puebla, perhaps named for a free-leaping waterfall. At the end of this upward stretch, there are several crosses, one of which bears the name of Rosas Islas.

From this point on, the path is not so steep but it continues to ascend, passing over a rocky patch and a long sand ramp, with cairns every 50-100 meters. Towards the end, the ramp becomes somewhat steeper and ends at a group of medium-sized rocks. Just past these rocks, you can see the hut.

There is a small camping area near the hut, with water that comes from a mountain wash.

In the past, the route did not lead to Rosas Islas, but cut across the Milpulco Ravine and followed a series of lovely waterfalls and sulfurous lands until it reached the cross commemorating Moisés Ezquenasi; from there, it led up to the hut. The views along the old route are indescribable, and there are many spots worth visiting just off the route.

Southwestern Routes

ROUTES TO THE *PECHO* (BREAST)

(from north to south)

Club Citlaltépetl (1)

This route goes up the left side of the Ayoloco glacier and runs along the base of the enormous rock called Peña Ordóñez. It takes approximately 4 hours to get to the summit from the Ayoloco II Hut . Dangerous. Opened by the Citlaltépetl Club, for which it is named.

Ayoloco Glacier (2)

Starts at the Ayoloco II Hut and goes straight up the glacier, between two rock massifs named Peña Ordóñez (left) and Peña Aguilera (right). It's about 4 hours to the summit.

The average slope is about 40 degrees. It is recommended when there is plenty of snow. This route is used by relatively experienced mountain climbers to avoid the commotion on the Normal route, the long distance to the top, and the false summits. There's an altitude gain of about 890 m.

The ice drain on the right edge is ideal for ice climbing.

This route could have been the one used by James de Salis in 1889.

Normal Route, or *Rodillas (Knees) or Arista del Sol (Sun Ridge) (3)*

The route starts from the Grupo de los Cien Hut and climbs eastward towards a platform. It then makes a 90° turn and goes on towards the Knees. It passes through a rock field where it may be necessary to use your hands, but no technical expertise is required. An enormous cross placed at the midpoint of this route commemorates a tragic accident in which 11 students from Guadalajara died after they were trapped in a snowstorm on the way down after summiting late in the day. The ruins of the Dr. Luis Méndez Hut are found on the first Knee. The path then winds around an eroded crater on its way to the second Knee. Generally speaking the path is well marked and quite obvious because it runs along the Sun Ridge to the summit, crossing the *Panza (Belly)* and ascending to the Breast.

It's about 3-4 hours to the summit. Depending on the climate, it may be necessary to use crampons after leaving the Grupo de los Cien Hut, especially if there is a lot of snow, but in most cases you won't need them until you get to the Knees. It's a good idea for people with little experience to take a rope because ice often forms on the Belly. the path is horizontal, but serious falls are not uncommon.

From the ruins of the Luis Méndez Hut, there's a sand or snow-covered ramp known as Totonacos that goes straight down to the Grupo de los Cien Hut, but previous knowledge of the route is necessary in order to avoid a cliff in the middle of the trail. If you use this route you must be trained in self-arrest techniques. Be very careful if there are other people ahead or behind you because there are many loose rocks that roll down the slope at high speed.

ROUTES TO THE PIES (FEET)

This is a largely ignored summit, but it has spectacular views and a relatively low level of difficulty, as well as a lower elevation than the other summits (4,741 m asl). Most of the time there is no snow, and regular cold weather clothing will be sufficient, along with a small safety rope (part of the trail on the north side is in bad condition).

South (A)

Following this route from Altzomoni, head towards the southern slope and climb up a long sandy ramp, hiking along the top of a series of cliffs that descend from the Feet. The ramp rarely has any snow. It is ideal for beginners and for

acclimatization. It's a long route and can be used as a descent after climbing to the Feet by other routes.

Variation (B)

This route ascends from La Joya. Just before the Portillo de la Guglia (see La Joya-Grupo de los Cien Hut) it runs laterally along the base of the cliffs until intersecting the previous route.

Easy and ideal for beginners. It's necessary to use your hands at times.

It can be used as a descent after climbing to the Feet by other routes.

Southwest Ridge (C)

Slightly more technical than the former route, this one requires a guide the first time. It starts from the Portillo de la Guglia (ver La Joya-Albergue Grupo de los Cien) and goes over the rocks next to the Portillo on the Feet side. After arriving at the first platform, you must climb a 3-4 meter wall with rock steps and keep going until you get to a shoulder that leads to the base of the last pyramid. Ascend on the left side until you arrive at the last wall. A natural walkway leads to the northern face. Go around it to get to the summit.

This slightly confusing yet technically simple alpine route is useful for training beginners.

North (D)

Slightly more technical than the former route, this one requires a guide the first time. It starts from the Portillo de los Pies (see La Joya- Grupo de los Cien Hut) where a path climbs the sandy slope crossing the northern face of this massif until arriving at the shoulder described on the former route. Follow the prior instructions from this point to the summit.

On parts of this route there are loose rocks and steep slopes. It is recommended that you go with an experienced guide and that you use a rope on the most difficult stretches.

Northwestern Routes

SAN RAFAEL-CHALCHOAPAN HUT

This is a classic route for climbing the "White Woman". It starts in the town of San Rafael, State of México, Municipality of Tlalmanalco. A paper factory built during the Porfirio Díaz regime is located there, and you'll see European influences on factory buildings and in the town. The main street named La Cuesta heads eastward and upward to another road ending at the ravine known as the *Cañada del Negro* (Black Man's Ravine).

On the other side of town, there are two choices at the fork in the road: to go straight ahead or turn right (at an old "L" shaped tree), and hike the Cañada del Negro.

El Caracol: If you go straight ahead, you'll come to a long, winding path through the woods known as *El Caracol* (The Snail). A hike down this path will take you to a water deposit called Dos Aguas or Plan de la Cuesta. From here, the path continues until the Nexcoalango station. The rapid change of vegetation is impressive, going from pine forests to a sub-alpine zone. At this point, there is a breathtaking view of the Head and Shoulder of the "White Woman."

Cañada del Negro: At the fork in the road, turn right and follow the old stone aqueduct to the Cañada del Negro. You'll come to the remains of an old power generator that utilized the water flowing through the tube from Nexcoalango and was called Cabeza de Negro. A 20 minute walk on the other side of it will take you to a beautiful waterfall called the *Cascada de los Diamantes* (Diamond Waterfall). You may have to use your hands occasionally on this hike. On the left side of the Cabeza del Negro generator, there's a path leading to the bottom of a huge rock wall where the water tube descends. On the right side, there are cast iron steps forming a long stairway known as Las Grapas. It's almost 100 years old and extremely dangerous. Further to the right, you can climb up over the rocks. Once over the wall, you get to a steep slope with several uphill paths that take you to Nexcoalango.

To get to Chalchoapan, follow the aqueduct from Nexcoalango. It's a relaxing, 30 minute walk along a fairly level path, with delightful scenery. Halfway down the path there's a concrete building called *El Mirador* (the Lookout Station), which is now used as lodging by woodcutters and hikers. The walk ends at another stone house called Las Trancas.

From here, an uphill path runs along a ridge known as *Loma Larga* (Long Hill). Once you've climbed it you'll agree that it's a credit to its name. At the end of the ridge by the tree line there's a roofless, cement building known as *Láminas* (Sheet Metal), although the original name was *La Mina* (the Mine). This little house sits at the bottom of a hill. A walk around it on the south side will take you to a secluded valley with a view of the Valley of Mexico, the majestic Head of Iztaccíhuatl, and, to the north, the rock formations called the Yautepemes and further in the distance the huge monolith called El Solitario (the Loner). It is rightfully called the *Valle de los Arrepentidos* (Valley of Regrets). Its altitude is approximately 4,000 m asl and the climate is cold. At a relaxed pace, it usually takes 6 or 7 hours to get there from San Rafael.

From this valley, an easily identified Pleistocene glacier signals the exit route. A rock massif can be seen from here, and a path leads over the top of it to the *Valle del Silencio*, or Silence Valley. It's also well-named, particularly in foggy conditions, which are common. The fog makes climbing extremely dangerous if you are not familiar with the route. After this valley there is a big sandy slope, which is the last obstacle before reaching the Chalchoapan Hut.

This sand hill, visible from San Rafael, is known as Tumbaburros. Only those that have crossed it 20 times know which route will require less energy. (The word *tumbaburros* literally means something that knocks down or kills donkeys, and

since donkeys are often associated with ignorance, the word normally refers to a dictionary or, in this case, an enlightening experience.)

From the top of Tumbaburros, you can see the silver gleam of the Chalchoapan Hut. It is located on the high part of what used to be a glacier lake basin, and at times there is water from melted snow or ice in the basin. The view is spectacular when the basin is covered with snow. Care should be taken when hiking on the east side of the basin because there are sometimes mudslides or avalanches so tremendous that their noise can be heard from miles away. There are reports of climbers lost in them and never found.

There are a number of recommendations regarding orientation, warm clothing, and good physical condition that you should follow to get to this point, but if you go further, safety precautions become even more important. Up until a few years ago, the glacier at the *Cuello* (Neck) of Iztaccíhuatl offered safe passage to the summit at the Breast. Even so, you had to scale icy slopes of up to 50 degrees. Currently, there is a plaque of solid gray ice known as "black ice," which is a mix of volcanic ash and compressed ice, forming a very hard surface. This climb requires rope travel with an ice ax.

SAN RAFAEL-TÉYOTL HUT

Vía Nexcoalango: The route to the Táyotl Hut runs from Nexcoalango (see prior description) towards the northeast to a house called La Ciénega (The Marsh) or Vaquerías (Cowherds) built by local cowboys and now used as a shelter. From there, take the westward path towards a hill, and go on to a grassy area. Once you've identified the Táyotl peak to the north of Iztaccíhuatl's Head, walk on towards the saddle between these two points.

The trail leads to the base of El Solitario, quite conspicuous from afar. The monolith is a landmark that helps you find the hut, situated at the base of the vertical walls of Táyotl amidst huge rocks.

Vía La Marrana (vehicle): From San Rafael, you'll need 4WD to drive up the dirt roads to the old San Rafael paper factory and then on to Llano Grande el Alto, but you must have permission to use those roads from the *Comisariado Ejidal* (communal land authority) in Tlalmanalco (Calle Zaragoza No. 34). You may apply for this permit several days ahead of time, but you must show up in person to get it since you will probably be charged a fee based on subjective criteria.

The road that heads north is not as rough as the other one, where constant mudslides are common. It's rather hard to find, so you'll have to ask for directions in town. It's easy to get to Llano Grande because there are very few forks in the road. When you do come to one, always take the road leading upward. Once you're there, it's more difficult to find the road to La Marrana because there are several turnoffs.

Northwestern routes

ROUTES TO THE PECHO (BREAST)

Arista de la Luz (Light Ridge) (1)

This trail goes up to the Neck by way of the Ayolotepito Glacier and continues along the ridge known as Arista de la Luz to the summit. It takes approximately 4 hours from Chalchoapan. Beginners need a guide. There's danger from falling stones on the road to the Neck.

The average slope angle is 30 degrees, and there are short stretches with crevices where you'll have to use your hands. Recommended only when there's a lot of snow due to the risk of falling rocks and ice.

The route was probably opened by explorers in the Club Exploraciones de Mexico (CEMAC). The ridge was named Arista de la Luz in 1930 because the Puebla side to the east lights up in the morning while the west side is shady.

Direct to the Breast (2)

There are several routes to the Breast, which are all variations on a direct line. Most of them start before the Neck and lead towards the Breast, zigzagging between crevices. They take approximately 4 hours from Chalchoapan. Intermediate and advanced levels.

The ascent is technical with an average slope angle of 30-35 degrees. There are several large fissures. Recommended only when there's a lot of snow.

The first of these routes was opened by Ricardo Mancera, of CEMAC, on November 2, 1931. In November of 1936, CEMAC members opened the super direct route known as La Directísima.

Corridors on the Breast (3)

The cliffs on the right side of the direct route form upper and lower corridors.

Between 1954 and 1962 three routes were opened on ledges in this area. When there's not much snow, they are dangerous because of loose rocks and black ice. These highly technical routes require ice climbing on some stretches.

The *Ala del Ángel* (Angel Wing) formation once stood in this area, but it fell in a huge landslide in 1978. The Ojo de Ballena (Whale's Eye) was then formed. In 1980, Sergio Fitsch opened a route variation known as Las Cascadas (The Waterfalls), which requires mixed climbing techniques.

Drains on the Breast (4)

Coladores (drains) are located south of the Corridors, where at least three technical routes were opened between 1936 and 1940 (CEMAC and Coyotes Club). All are highly technical and dangerous.

Oñate Ramp (5)

Further south, but still on the northwestern face of the Breast pyramid, there's a diagonal ramp that joins the other routes at the base of the Northwest Glacier. This ramp is only for experts and can only be used when there is snow. Fatal accidents have occurred here.

ROUTES TO THE CABEZA (HEAD)

Climbing to the Head has become infinitely more dangerous due to climate changes in recent years that have provoked a thaw and, consequently, avalanches. Ice and loose rocks abound. Most of the classic routes and their variations are now extremely dangerous or have disappeared altogether. Those that remain are exclusively for experts who know the terrain and are skilled in ice and rock climbing techniques.

Along the Neck (A)

This route goes from the Ayolotepito Glacier to the Neck and then on to the Head on an easily distinguishable trail. There's a 25 meter climb along a rock wall called *La Barba* (the Beard). A low technical level is sufficient, but the rocks are very unstable.

At the end of the rock wall, continue on to the Head summit, which is marked by a cross.

Las Agujas (The Needles) or *La Trenza* (The Braid) (B)

From Chalchoapan the route goes over sharp rocks that remind us of needles; climbers can go around them or scale them (Class 4). At the end there is a wall that you can go around from the left (dangerous) or scale (very dangerous). Apparently opened by Francisco Soto (CEMAC) in December of 1930.

***La Oreja Derecha* (The Right Ear) (C)**

This route climbs parallel to that of the Needles and ends at the same wall. Dangerous. It is not currently used because of many avalanches. Although the approach is usually made from the northern part of the mountain, there is also access from Chalchoapan.

Medina Corridor (D)

So named for CEMAC member Juan Medina Saldaña, although the first registered ascent is by the Cuerpo Alpinista Mexicano (Mexican Alpinist Corps) in 1927. It is not currently used because of many avalanches.

Northwest Corridor (E)

A variation of the former route, this one descends on the northern side in the direction of the Táyotl Hut. Very dangerous. It is not currently used because of many avalanches. M. Vizcaíno, Sierra Club, 1942.

Northwest Ridge (F)

This route is extremely difficult and dangerous. It involves mixed climbing techniques over unstable, decomposed rock. The first time this wall was scaled, it was necessary to bivouac.

Guillermo Álvarez del Castillo y Gustavo Díaz, 1976.

Unscalable routes, or *La Cabellera* (The Mane) (G)

Several routes were opened at this wall, but current mountain conditions make them impassable.

Eastern Routes

Most of these are accessible from the Táyotl Hut or from La Joya by going part way around the mountain. Some mountaineers climb from the Valley of Puebla, but the approach is long and there are no alpine huts on the trail.

The mountain's eastern glacier, called *Glaciares Orientales* has been greatly reduced, which makes the classic routes very dangerous or impassable although there are reports of special places for ice climbing.

Torre de San Agustín (St. Augustine Tower) (6 y 7)

From La Joya: Climb to the Portillo de los Pies and continue in the direction of the Grupo de los Cien Hut. Before you get to the bull's eye, start turning towards a large rock formation on the east side of the mountain called *La Catedral* (The Cathedral). Further on, at a height of about 4,500 m asl, you reach the base of the St. Augustine Tower.

You can ascend on the left side (St. Augustine Glacier, difficult) or the right side of the Tower (slightly easier), merging with the Knees route. It is important to have a guide and climb only when there are good snow conditions. On this side of the mountain there is no regular Alpine Rescue patrol and it is very isolated, so getting help in the event of an accident is very difficult.

Eduardo de María y Campos, Moisés Ábrego, Adolfo Vázquez, Ignacio Zaballa and Enrique Urrutia first climbed this route (on the left side) during Easter Week of 1949.

From Fraccionamiento Buenavista: 4WD vehicle required. On the largely unpaved highway going up from Cholula to the Paso de Cortés, about 6 km before you reach the Paso de Cortés, turn right towards the Buenavista Subdivision, located about 1.5 km to the north. Stay on the dirt road about 11.5 km until you reach a place called *Casa de Don Nico* (Don Nico's House), where the road is impassable and it is necessary to park the car. On the upward climb, follow the stream with the Tepechichina Hill always on the left and some cliffs on the right. Just before you get to the waterfalls, turn right, passing by another cliff. Keep climbing towards the St. Augustine Tower.

Huilango or East Central Glacier (8)

From the base of the Torre de San Agustín keep heading north at 4,600-4,700 m elevation towards the base of the glacier. Another option is to climb straight up from the Casa de Don Nico although it's not easy to find the trail.

Near the tree line you come to the Huilango Hut, a small cave in the rock that's been enlarged with an additional wall, often used by shepherders as a stable.

Intermediate level. A guide is strongly recommended. 35-40 degree average slope. Climb only when snow-covered.

Glaciares Orientales (Eastern Glaciers) or Murallas Blancas (White Walls) (9)

These glaciers are disappearing and the route is highly technical and not appropriate for beginners. The rock is likely to crumble for lack of snow.

The closest access point is the Táyotl Hut. The route climbs to Texcal de Marcos (a gap between Iztaccíhuatl's Head and the Táyotl Volcano) and goes around the Head at an altitude of 4,750 m asl. You reach the former location of the Glaciares Orientales Hut, which was blown away by strong gusts of wind when the door was left open.

There are at least four variations departing from this point. All descend to the south, bypass a cliff and then take a central ascending route from which all variations branch off.

These variations were opened by CEMAC, the first one on April 11, 1947.

Direct to Breast (10)

Currently impassable. There are variations that run parallel and slightly below the Arista de la Luz on the eastern face. The first of these routes was apparently opened in 1957 by members of the Asociación de Excursionismo in the state of Puebla.

Arista de la Luz (Light Ridge) (1)

A straight climb from the place that Glaciares Orientales Hut once stood, this route merges at the Neck with the Arista de la Luz route formerly described. Appropriate for beginners with a guide, although the difficulty has increased in recent years due to the receding glaciers and lack of snow (falling rocks).

TÉYOTL

The Táyotl volcano is the oldest part of Iztaccíhuatl, thus it is a highly eroded summit. There are several ascent routes, all very simple and rarely requiring high altitude gear like crampons or ice axes. You can climb this volcano year round, being careful of thunder storms, and loose rocks dislodged by climbing partners climbing up the sides ahead of you.

The summit of this volcano reaches an altitude of 4,660 m (depending on the source consulted). The name means "where rocks are born," immediately suggesting the geological importance of this place.

This ascent is ideal for high altitude training, since elevation is gained gradually and the sand gullies are very similar to those on the higher summits of Iztaccíhuatl. The views of the Iztaccíhuatl's Head from this volcano are breathtaking, assuming that there is no fog assuming that there is no fog.

Access is similar to that described for the Táyotl Hut, and you can climb straight up the slope from the hut, watching out for loose rocks, or climb along the ridge from the La Marrana stream or from Llano Grande el Alto, which you can get to in a 4WD vehicle.

GARRA DEL TÉYOTL (TÉYOTL'S CLAW)

At the end of the ridge heading NNW from the Táyotl volcano, there is another small summit of incomparable beauty due to its location in the middle of the woods. It is a rocky outgrowth that is easy to climb, and at the top there's a small iron cross. The reported altitude of this small volcano is 3,960 m asl. *Garra* means "claw," a reference to the shape of the rock.

You can get there from Llano Grande el Alto or indirectly by following the Táyotl ridge, trying not to descend to the creeks between the ridges oriented towards the NW and NNW.

AMALACAXCO

Considered by many people as the final spur on the Iztaccíhuatl volcano, this descending ridge starts from the Alzomoni Hill, 2 km from La Joya. There are two summits: Amalacaxco and Venacho.

You can easily get to Amalacaxco from the Alzomoni television relay by following the crest of the ridge. The summit is just above the tree line, so the route is uncluttered, almost pure pastureland.

VENACHO

Venacho is located at the end of the Alzomoni-Amalacaxco ridge (see map). You can climb this volcano from the Tomacoco ranch (driving or taking a taxi from Amecameca) or by crossing the fields on the other side of San Pedro Nexapa, just before the road to Paso de Cortés begins to climb (a one-day outing). It's easy to get confused and lose your way in the forest or to make the mistake of descending to the cliffs on the western or northwestern side, so it's best to take a guide.

You can also get there from Alzomoni by walking along the ridge formerly described (a half-day outing).

This volcano had an altitude of 3,980 m asl, which means that the climb from the base (2,700 m asl) is strenuous.

CERRO CATEDRAL (CATHEDRAL HILL)

This is a small peak on the west side of Ixtaccíhuatl in the state of Puebla. Seldom visited because of its off-route location, it offers an extraordinary view of the Valley of Puebla. To get there from La Joya, climb towards the Portillo de los Pies and continue in the direction of the Grupo de los Cien Hut. Before you get to the bull's eye, begin to turn towards a huge rocky formation on the west side of Cathedral Hill. Once you get to the Portillo, climb very carefully because of exceptionally loose rocks. It's recommended that you climb with ropes and that you go with someone who is familiar with this technique. Don't underestimate the difficulty of the ascent because there are no regular patrols in this area.

TORRE DE SAN AGUSTÍN (ST. AUGUSTINE TOWER)

Due to the high altitude of this rock tower, it's essential to take all precautions, using mixed techniques for climbing on snow, rock, and ice. You can get there by climbing up the side, using the Eastern Routes or by taking the Normal Route to the Knees. Then approach the tower by going around an increasingly obvious crater located between the Knees, or by walking along the Belly. This was a traditional ascent in the 50s and is still used by some clubs. It is generally considered appropriate for beginners with a guide.

CIRCLING IZTACCÍHUATL

This hike from one end of the volcano to the other and back at altitudes of 4,600-4,700 m asl requires hikers to be in excellent physical condition, but it is also used by some clubs in their introductory courses to mountain climbing. It's possible to start out in either direction, but since there are hardly any huts on the eastern side, it's better to start out fresh on the western side the first time around. If it's impossible to finish in one day, the Téryotl Hut and those on the western side provide shelter.

It's a good idea to allow two days for the trip, which involves 16-18 hours of hiking (and an overnight stay at the Téryotl Hut). The route between the huts is not marked, so it's important to take a guide and to travel light. You can make this excursion at any season of the year, but in the winter you'll need an ice ax and crampons.

Generally speaking, hikers start out from La Joya and climb to the pass between the Knee and Cathedral Hill (see topographical map), then continue on the east side to the Téryotl Hut. At this point you must descend to 4,300 m asl (the lowest point on the trip, besides La Joya). You make the turn at the Head, going over the Yautepemes rocks and ascending to the Chalchoapan Hut, maintaining the same altitude until you get to Ayoloco. You'll have to look for the place to cross the ravine with the Ayoloco River running along the bottom (at the lowest point on the rocky crest), then climb 100 meters up to the hut, and finally, descend to La Joya along the conventional route. The first recorded excursion was on November 1 and 2, 1945, by CEMAC members.