

Our desire to travel to Bolivia has always been fueled by the fly-fishing potential in the exotic jungle rivers of the Amazon. As we found out over the course of three weeks, the legendary tales of carnivorous fish and breathtaking scenery were all true, and they exceeded our wildest dreams. The month of August seemed like the best time to go; the prime time for fishing and climbing overlapped, giving us the perfect chance to pursue our two greatest addictions in one trip. We couldn't travel all the way down to Bolivia, the highest country in South America, without experiencing the huge mountains, admired by early explorers as the "Himalaya of the new world." From fishing in the subtropical Amazonian creeks to skiing down the slopes of the high peaks at the creeks' source, this journey was a grand lesson on the cultural and biodiversity of this remote country.

Arriving in La Paz in the middle of the night after a sketchy series of taxis and a connecting flight had Neil and I completely stressed out. Our friends from Santa Cruz who'd taken such great care of us could do nothing for us now. Luckily I had arranged to meet a new friend, Alistair Matthew, who owns a mountain bike guiding company called Gravity Bolivia. He did us a huge solid by lining up a hotel and taxi from the airport which helped us get a nice head start on the acclimating process.

We ended up spending more time fishing in the jungle than we'd planned. We just couldn't get enough. That meant we had less than a week to ski something in the mountains before our flights back home to the US. The elevation change was definitely affecting us on our one and only day of gathering supplies and acclimating in the city, which sits at around 12,000ft. We figured that with the time that we had, and the time it would take to go to and from base camp while giving our brains a chance to adjust to the altitude, we would only have one full day for a ski objective.

A local climbing guide named Marco picked us up at our hotel before sunrise in his four-wheel drive Toyota, and off we went down the busted-up streets of La Paz, en route to the Cordillera Real and Condoriri massif. Bolivia has some of the easiest access in the world to rugged and high mountains, particularly those above 6000 meters. Easy access that we couldn't enjoy due to the numerous protests and roadblocks we encountered along the way. What should have been a two-hour drive turned into a five-hour drive as we weaved through the incredibly rough countryside, dodging burning trash piles and angry protesters.

Marco was psyched to see two young guys adventuring in his country, and he shared with us some of his knowledge of the area and stories of his days as a mountaineer. He talked his way out of a roadblock situation where a couple angry drunks threatened to smash our windows in with rocks, and delivered us safely to the base of the mountain. We asked him to pick us up in a few days but expressed our concern about more roadblocks considering we barely made it on the way in. He said not to worry, they don't protest on Saturdays.

It felt great to have our gear loaded up on a couple donkeys heading up towards our base camp, away from the stress of the city and impoverished communities of the altiplano. We set up our tent along the shores of a beautiful glacial lake at the foot of Condoriri where we chilled for the rest of the day and let our bodies get used to the 15,000ft elevation. Llamas grazed the hillsides above camp as we fired up the white gas stove for dinner in this gorgeous Andean setting.

On our one and only ski day we woke up to a skiff of new snow and brilliant blue skies. We'd done a fair bit of ski mountaineering in the past, but this was our first time at elevation, so we chose to stay conservative. The day consisted of ascending a 2000ft glacier, reaching a crest, and looking eastward down into the great Amazon basin where we'd spent so much time fishing. That was our only real goal for the ski trip, to reach the exact source of the river. We moved slowly up the mountain, checking out all of the cool options for ski descents. Our narrow window of opportunity wouldn't allow us to ski any of them but we were happy to enjoy a long glacier ski run with some decent snow quality. The Condoriri area turned out to be the perfect place to get our first little taste of Bolivian mountain culture.

Skiing down the snow-covered mountains that drain into the source of the Amazon, where the greatest fishing of my life took place, was a memorable moment indeed. I realized how far I've come from the tiny hills of Connecticut and how strongly skiing factors into my need for adventure. Through skiing I've discovered other ways to engage nature, such as fly fishing and climbing, and through those new passions I've found myself in wild places like Bolivia. It's a beautiful thing to travel the world driven by passion and the knowledge that our time here is short. It motivates me to make the absolute most out of every single trip I take.