



AAC Publications

Kamet (7,756m), southwest face, Spicy Game

India, Central Garhwal

Expeditions to India can be a disaster for morale, if they experience a combination of bad conditions, bad weather, bad local services, and too spicy food. This was the case for the 2009 Groupe Militaire de Haute Montagne (GMHM) expedition to Kamet's neighboring summit, 7,242m Mukut Parvat. [This ascent was incorrectly reported in **AAJ 2010**. On October 2, 2009, six members of the GMHM, Albrieux, Bohin, Giacobi, Jourdain, Pellissier, and Poitevin reached the summit of 7,130m Mukut Parvat East from 6,400m Slingsby's Col, between Mukut Parvat and Abi Gamin/Kamet. This was the first alpine-style ascent, following the route pioneered in 1999 by the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering expedition.] **From their advanced base on the Paschimi (West) Kamet Glacier, they had a good look at the southwest face of Kamet, which they found so steep that looking up at the summit gave them a stiff neck.**

For us it was completely different: The only rain or snowfall occurred on the approach. Our staff comprised a cook, a number of porters, all of whom could no doubt climb the 14 8,000ers in a short month, and an excellent sirdar. This allowed us to concentrate totally on our goal, an ascent of the southwest face of Kamet, the highest mountain for which it is possible to get a permit to climb from Indian soil [Kangchenjunga from Sikkim is banned for religious reasons, while Nanda Devi and the Nanda Devi Sanctuary remain off limits].

We placed base camp at 5,300m on the tortuous Paschimi Kamet Glacier. Advanced base was situated on the upper glacier at 5,800m, and from here we could see that the southwest face was in excellent condition.

For further acclimatization Sébastien Bohin, Didier Jourdain, Sébastien Ratel, and I climbed on the west ridge of Mana Northwest (7,092m), spending two nights at 6,300m and reaching 6,500m on this long but objectively safe snow crest first climbed in 1995 by an Indo-Japanese team. It would be a good goal in itself for an expedition. Three days after our descent, and with the weather fair, we made our attempt on Kamet.

All four of us left advanced base at 3:30 a.m. on September 22, and only a few hours later were at grips with vertical ice pitches. We took the easiest route up the nearly 2,000m face, a succession of steep snow traverses linked by good soft-ice gullies (some requiring the leader to haul his pack). We found nowhere flat that was bigger than a magazine, and it took plenty of time and energy to create tent platforms. We took minimal equipment and free-climbed throughout. Our last bivouac was on the south face/ridge at 7,500m, and we reached the summit the following day, our fifth above advanced base, after overcoming unexpected difficulties on the final section. The top was as flat and large as a cricket pitch, but French don't play this game, so we just sat for an hour and appreciated the superb panorama over the Himalaya and Tibetan Plateau.

After another night at our top bivouac, we descended the narrow, hidden, inset south face separating our route from the 2008 line Samurai Direct (Hiraide-Taniguchi) on the southeast face. At the bottom of the south face we rappelled the icefall to the west, descending a labyrinth of stone and seracs, before reaching advanced base in the dark.

A few days later we were on the road to Delhi and the most dangerous part of our visit to India. Restaurants here are Russian roulette, and we often lost, ordering spicy food from an impossible-to-understand menu. We named the route in homage to our tongues, which were burned three times a

day by all sorts of pickle. Like climbing mountains, maybe this game is also about pushing your limits. Spicy Game (ED VI/5+ 90°); summit reached September 27.

Sébastien Moatti, France, with additional information from Didier Jourdain

Images



The sun's rays strike Didier Jourdain for the first time on day three, as he moves up towards more difficult mixed terrain on Kamet's west face.



Sébastien Moatti approaching the steep ice runnels of the first day of the ascent of Kamet's southwest face.

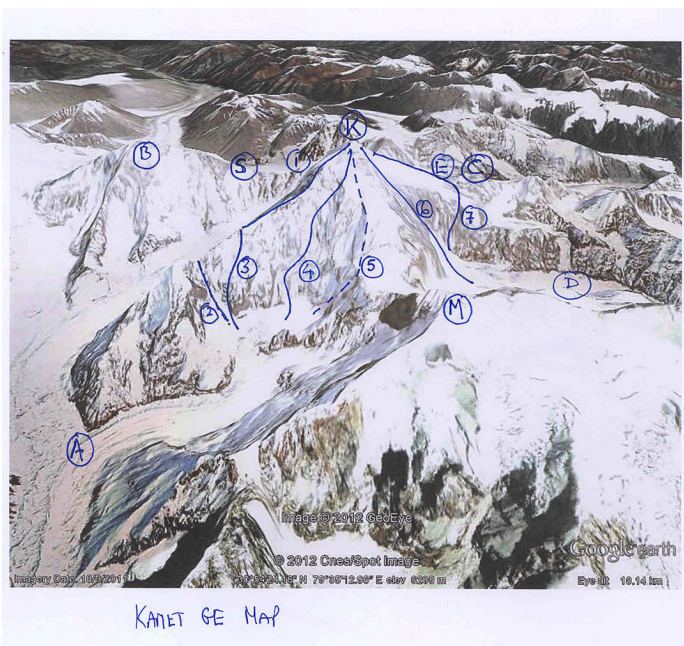


Didier Jourdain at 7,700m on the south ridge of Kamet. Behind him is the top of Mana Northwest (7,092m). The French acclimatized by climbing the right-hand (west) ridge to ca 6,500m, the corniced snowy bump where the ridge begins to flatten. The moraine-covered Paschimi Kamet Glacier (and French basecamp) is down to the right, while the high, triple-summitted peak in the right distance is

Chaukamba (7,138m).



Southwest face of Kamet. (1) The "Indian Couloir", climbed to the west ridge by Indians in 2010 and French in 2012, is hidden but reaches the crest behind the triangular pointed snow pyramid. (2) 1985 Indo-French West Ridge. (3) Spicy Game (2012), with bivouacs. (4) South face/ridge descended by the French in 2012 (rappelling the seracs at the bottom to return to the glacier basin below the face).



(A) Paschimi Kamet Glacier. (B) Mukut Parvat. (C) Abi Gamin. (D) Purbi Kamet Glacier. (E) Meade's Col. (K) Kamet. (S) Slingsby's Col. (M) Mana Northwest. (1) Northwest ridge. (2) "Indian Couloir". (3) 1985 Indo-French West Ridge. (4) Southwest face - Spicy Game. (5) South face - south ridge descent. (6) Southeast face - Samuri Direct. (7) Normal Route.

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