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Phupharka Himal, Vendée Himal (5,488m)

Asia, Nepal, Far West

Northwest of Simikot, the principal airport of West Nepal, lies the remote valley of Limi (a.k.a. Takuche Khola) and its three villages: Jang, Waljie, and Til. They are Tibetan in culture, isolated in winter, but linked to China by a road over the Lapche La (ca 5,000m) for three months of the year. Northeast of Simikot lies the Chuwa Khola Valley, descending from the Changla La, an ancient traders' pass across the border. Between the two there are ca 15 summits of 6,000m or above, all virgin and most unnamed.

We wanted to visit this paradise for exploratory mountaineering, ascending the Chuwa Khola before branching left and crossing the Nying La from the east. After this we planned to climb Ashvin, one of the 6,000ers. However, heavy spring snow blocked normal access routes to Limi. Desperate to reach Waljie and its four-faced Vairocana Buddha statue, unique in Asia, we decided to go west from Simikot to Yangar, and then cross the small Phupharka Himal to the north. Reaching a base camp proved easy with mules. We then left our Nepalese staff, crossed a snowy col (Phupharka La, 5,175m), and in passing a second ridge climbed a peak we named Vendée Himal. We reached the Limi Valley with just sleeping bags in our rucksacks. We were delighted with the statue and the hospitality of local villagers, but after we returned to a high camp on the Ardang Glacier, bad weather thwarted our plans to attempt Ardang (6,034m) or Tirawa Himal (5,876m). We forced a passage across the Ardang La (5,580m) and reunited with our Nepalese team.

Ardang, either by the easier south face or more directly from the north, presents an attractive objective. It should be on the list of new peaks opened by the government in 2014. I also suggest you look at Phupharka Himal (5,630m), especially its elegant north ridge.

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Images



Unclimbed Ardang from the north



Unclimbed Ardang from the south. The gentle snow peak on the far left is unclimbed Tirawa Himal



Unclimbed Phupharka Himal, with the elegant north ridge dropping toward the camera

Article Details

Author	Paulo Grobel
Publication	AAJ
Volume	0
Issue	0
Page	0
Copyright Date	2014
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions