



## AAC Publications

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### **Gasherbrum I (8,068m), South Face, Winter Attempt**

Asia, Pakistan, Baltoro Muztagh

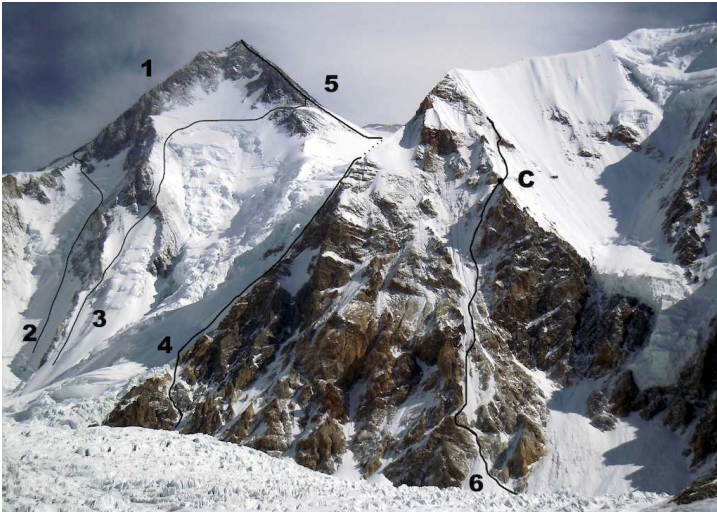
In 2011, together with Alex Txikon from Spain, we spent more than 50 days making the first attempt to climb Gasherbrum I in winter. The approach to this mountain had never been done on foot in winter; we took seven days to walk from Askole to base camp at 5,100m, arriving on January 31. During the previous autumn we had employed a caravan of porters to take all our equipment to base camp. Now, we discovered some of the equipment had either been stolen or broken—but not enough to put our project in jeopardy. Base camp temperatures were similar to Quebec, between -20 and -30°C at night, and our spirits were high, particularly after Simone Moro, Cory Richards, and Denis Urubko made their historic first winter ascent of Gasherbrum II [see previous report].

We planned to climb the mountain by a partial new route, following the couloir and ridge close to the right edge of the triangular rock face that forms the left side of the west-southwest face of Hidden Sud (a.k.a. Gasherbrum South, 7,069m). The left bounding (west) ridge of the triangle was ascended in 1983 by Spanish climbers, while further to the right a prominent spur on the south-southwest face, leading directly to the top of Hidden Sud, was climbed by Frenchmen in 1980. At the top of the triangle (ca 6,800m) we would cross to the upper section of the southeast ridge, where we would join the original 1958 American Route at 7,500m.

We started opening the route on February 4, and from then till early March experienced nothing but clouds and poor weather. We worked hard to establish a camp at 6,300m on the crest of a rock spur. To that point the climbing had involved difficult rotten rock and hard ice to 70°. On March 9 we reached 6,650m, having climbed 1,500m of new ground, but the final 200m of ice rising to 70° was not climbable for us. The ice was like marble, and we simply were unable to place any ice screws for protection.

Back at base camp, weather forecaster Karl Gabl in Austria gave us a second chance. We decided to use the weather window to make an alpine-style attempt on the Standard Route up the Japanese Couloir. We spent our first night at 6,200m, and the second above the exit of the couloir at 7,050m. However, at this altitude the northeast wind was blowing more than 80km/hour, and showed no sign of abating next morning. Realizing to continue would be suicidal, we retreated and reached base camp on the 15th. We left the mountain on the 21st, the first day of spring.

## Images



Gasherbrum I from southwest. (1) Upper southwest ridge (Stremfelj-Zaplotnik, 1977). (2) Southwest face and southwest ridge (Afanasiev-Babanov, 2008). (3) Southwest face (Kukuczka-Kurtyka, 1983). (4) Hidden Sud west ridge and southeast ridge (Arnal-Cinto- Escartin-Lopez-Ortas-Ubieto, 1983). (5) Southeast ridge (Kauffman-Schoening, 1958). (6) Winter attempt with camp marked. The line followed by French climbers in 1980 lies just off picture to right.

## Article Details

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