



AAC Publications

Chanchakhi, North Face, First Winter Ascent

Russia, Caucasus

At the end of January 2014 we realized our aim of making a new route and the first winter ascent of the north face of Chanchakhi (4,462m). Our team included four Ukrainian climbers: Mikhaylo Mironchak, Volodymyr Roshko, Dmytro Venslavovsky, and me. We had a lot of problems with the political situation in Ukraine, the Olympic Games, the high police and military presence, and some violent snowfall, which paralyzed certain cities in southern Russia. Despite all of this we were able to reach the climbing base of Cey in North Ossetia.

To reach the mountain we spent two days walking through deep snow, which took a lot of power. On the day we arrived our thermometer showed -25°C and then died. We planned to climb the route in capsule style, using a portaledge camp. During the first two days we climbed approximately 200m on difficult ground with poor protection (A2 M4/5). The spindrift and low temperature (-30° to 35°C) turned this into a real fight. To climb 50m we spent three to five hours. Then came strong wind. After two difficult nights we decided to go down for a night's rest in the Nikolaevskaya hut. Dropping 700m made a big difference, and some sunny hours recovered our powers and increased our enthusiasm.

We returned to the mountain, and during the third day there was a lot of good mixed climbing as well as vertical, thin, porous ice that made protection impossible (A2 M5 WI5). The fourth day had enjoyable ice climbing and a vertical chimney with interesting mixed (up to M6). At 10 p.m. we set up our portaledge under an overhang. The fifth day we climbed 35m of overhanging rock and three more pitches, and on the sixth day easy climbing led to the summit and we descended to ABC. Our route ascended 730m (16 pitches) on the main wall, plus another four pitches to the summit.

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Images



The ca 750m north face of Chanchakhi, with the blue line marking the new route and first winter ascent.



Difficult winter climbing on the north face of Chanchakhi. The first winter ascent took six climbing days.



Tough conditions on the north face of Chanchakhi.



Following step ice on the north face of Chanchakhi.



Line of the first winter ascent of the north face of Chanchakhi in the Caucasus. The route involved 16 pitches on the main face, plus another 4 pitches to the summit.



The big overhang near the top of the north face.

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