



## AAC Publications

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### **Hagshu, North Face, and Other First Ascents**

India, Kishtwar Himalaya

**Ales Cesen, Marko Prezelj, and I had hoped to try Rimo III in India. We learned that a British team was also planning to attempt the mountain, and in May we found the British had been refused a permit—our agents and the IMF advised us to find another goal.**

We were disappointed, but after a few days of brainstorming we applied for Mukut Parbat; obtaining a permit for a mountain near Kamet was supposed to be simple. We kept in close contact with our agent, knowing that it was typical for the permit to be issued only a few weeks prior to arrival. To proceed with a permit requires an Indian visa, for which it is necessary to have airline tickets, so we bought tickets and freighted food and equipment to India. We were therefore shocked to learn, two weeks before departure from Slovenia, that we had to find another objective. We asked the IMF for clarification, but none was forthcoming. Ten days before our flights our agent told us the IMF was suggesting we climb an “open peak,” for which a regular tourist visa would suffice. He added, “Hagshu peak in Kishtwar, with approach from Zanskar, is a good option, and there are other peaks in that region too.... Please let me know if this is agreeable to you.”

We found limited information on this peak [see AAJ 2014 for the history of climbing on Hagshu], but with little alternative decided to confirm the permit with our agent, and at least explore the area. A few days before departure learned that the legendary British climbers Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden were planning to attempt the unclimbed north face. After the bureaucratic chaos on the part of the IMF, and our continuous goal-changing to accommodate their demands, we were not too upset by this news and felt there would be enough room for everyone. [See Paul Ramsden’s report for the British viewpoint on these events.]

In Delhi the IMF gave us a permit for September 7–October 14. When in Leh with our agent, however, we received a message from the IMF that we would need to leave base camp by September 26. This would give us 10 days at or above base camp. The request was, of course, unacceptable and we refused. On the first of our two days’ trek to base camp we met two Americans, and were surprised to hear that they too had a permit for Hagshu, even though they had no intention of climbing it. As we approached base camp at 4,400m on the west moraine of the Hagshu Glacier, we were surprised by how attractive Hagshu appeared compared to the few photos we’d seen. There was an obvious line on the north face and we decided to go for it. First we needed to acclimatize, and an extremely sharp, elegant peak above the base appeared to be of an appropriate height and difficulty for our first climb. On the 16th we bivouacked at a saddle below the east ridge, and the following day climbed the ridge to the summit in eight hours. It was longer and more difficult than expected, challenging us right to the top. We named the peak Lagan (5,750m), and our 700m route was TD- M5.

After a rest Ales and Marko went to establish advanced base (4,660m) under Hagshu and inspect the west wall, which also appeared interesting. The next day, the British arrived at base camp and Ales and Marko climbed Peak 5,680m in front of Hagshu, from which they had good views of both west and north walls. All three of us then went to climb Hana’s Men (ca 6,300m), which lay to the east of Hagshu and would give good views of our descent along the 1989 Polish Route. [Hana’s Men was first climbed in 2013 by the south face (AAJ 2014).] We climbed a steep couloir on the west face, with good conditions making for rapid progress. The line was logical and led to the west rib at 6,000m. We climbed compact rock on the crest to a bivouac at 6,200m. In the cold morning we reached the north summit, rappelled and downclimbed the northeast face, and returned to base camp the same day.

The 1,100m climb was TD.

After a three-day rest we moved to advanced base, and at 3 a.m. set off for Hagshu's north face with a small tent, two sleeping bags, and food for two bivouacs. Deep powder gave way to more rapid travel up the snow cone leading to the central part of the wall. We climbed unroped for ca 300m to the steepest part of the face, where we found very steep ice that was mirror-polished by spindrift and brittle as glass due to the cold. The upper face was surprisingly difficult, and there was nowhere suitable to bivouac. Finally, at 2 a.m., having been on the go for 23 hours, we found a good spot on a narrow rib at 6,320m.

We started late next day and, helped by the warmth of midday sun, continued with pleasant rock climbing to the north peak. From there we climbed and waded along the undulating ridge to the main (south) top, which we reached at 5 p.m. on the 30th. Nice weather persuaded us to stop and bivouac a few meters below the top. Next morning we descended the Polish route; during the steep rappels we all agreed that in 1989 the Poles had done an excellent job. We finally reached the glacier, and the last two hours to advanced base were spent meandering between moonlit crevasses. The 1,350m north face was ED 70–90°. We thank the Alpine Association of Slovenia for their support.

- Luka Lindic, Slovenia

## Images



Lagan from the east. The route of ascent followed the sharp ridge facing the camera.



Marko Prezelj starting his first block on Hagshu. As it was cold during the entire climb, with added spindrift, the team chose to swap leads every two pitches in order maintain some warmth.



Ales Cesen following the narrow ice smear, polished hard by spindrift. At this point the team was looking for a bivouac spot, but were unable to find one until near the top of the face.



Ales Cesen starting his first lead pitch on the north face of Hagshu. Conditions were changeable, with sections of thin, fragile ice and other passages where dry snow, blown onto the ice or under rocks like foam, had to be cleaned off.



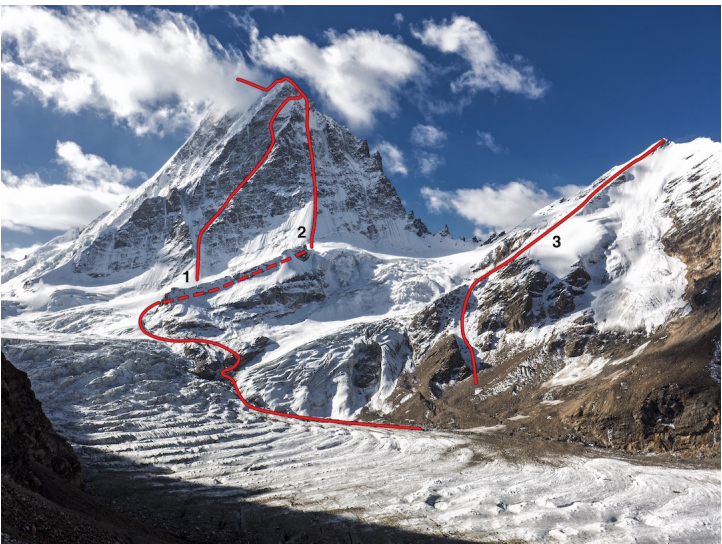
The north face of Hagshu and Slovenian route, seen from Peak 5,680m. Hana's Men is to the left, showing the Slovenian route.



On the summit of Lagan, looking southeast to Hana's Men (left) and Hagshu.



Luka Lindic on the north face of Hagshu. The team had anticipated hard snow and only a little hard ice; in fact there was much hard ice and dry snow, which slowed them down.



Hagshu from the north and (right) Peak 5,680m, showing various approaches and ascents. (1) Fowler-Ramsden Route. (2) Slovenian Route. (3) Cesen-Prezelj ascent on Peak 5,680m.

## Article Details

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