



AAC Publications

Brahmasar II; Sickle Spire; Brahmasar Du Tacul

India, Western Garhwal, Gangotri

On October 1, Jim Elzinga, Steve House, Buster Jesik, Colin Simon, and Steven Van Sickle gathered in Delhi for the final expedition of the 2012–2014 Alpine Mentors program. [This is a U.S.-based, volunteer-run program to train young alpinists. See feature article in this edition.] The goal was the first ascent of Brahmasar I (5,850m), which rises between the Satling and Dudhganga glaciers, just south of Thalay Sagar. An easy four-day trek through a series of beautiful mountain villages led to a base camp at the mouth of the Bhilangna River.

Advanced base was established three hours' walk above base camp at the toe of the Dudhganga Glacier. During reconnaissance, Steve and Steven climbed a peak they named Sickle Spire (5,334m, M5), which is part of a feature dubbed Brahmasar du Tacul, a 5,415m sub-summit on the ridge south of Brahmasar.

After more reconnaissance Buster, Colin, and Steven decided to head for a prominent couloir on the southwest face of Brahmasar. Jim and Steve climbed a parallel mixed route to the right. The first half of both routes was 45° snow, leading to a rock headwall. From this point Jim and Steve climbed straight up their mixed line (M6) to bivouac at the prominent notch between Brahmasar I and II. The next morning they turned south and climbed two pitches to the top of Brahmasar II (ca 5,830m). This was the second ascent. [In 2002 Keith Milne and Gordon Scott reached the southeast face of the peak via a long crossing from the Satling Glacier. They climbed a steep, narrow couloir (Scottish IV) to the notch between Brahmasar I and II, and then a UIAA IV chimney to the summit of Brahmasar II.]

The team of Buster, Colin, and Steven headed up left from the top of the 45° snow and into fun WI3/4 pitches. Their couloir had very few ledges, and steeper climbing than they had assumed. At around 4 p.m. they found a ledge large enough to fit 90 percent of their two-man tent. They endured a cramped bivouac and the following day turned around in the face of serious choss 50–100m below a col on the west ridge. They rappelled the route from that point.

The team's final climb was to the highest point of Brahmasar du Tacul. After much postholing Buster and Steven followed fun ice and firm névé to the summit boulder problem.

Information provided by **Steve House**, USA

Images



The southwest face of Brahmasar. (1) Jesik-Simon-Van Sickle attempt on unclimbed Brahmasar I (the tower above and right of their line). (2) Elzinga-House route to the summit of Brahmasar II. The prominent notch on this route was reached from the far side in 2002. Three climbers are visible on the upper snow slopes.



Brahmasar du Tacul. (1) Jesik-Van Sickle. (2) House-Van Sickle ascent to top of Sickle Spire.

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