



AAC Publications

Peak 4, Southeast Ridge, Attempt

Nepal, Mahalangur Himal – Makalu Section

On April 6, after a six-day trek from the rough road at Num, we arrived at Makalu base camp (ca 4,800m). With sponsorship from the Millet Expedition Project, we had come to try Peak 4 (6,736m), which at the time we believed to be unclimbed.

The east face gave few options that were not exposed to serac fall, but the southeast ridge looked like an elegant route to the summit. During our acclimatization toward Makalu, we also checked out lines from the north and found what appeared to be easy access to the northern summit (6,565m). However, from there the long ridge leading to the main summit did not look good. Tomeu hurt his back, then the weather was poor, and it wasn't until April 18, when we heard from parties passing through base camp that the weather next day would be good, that we set off for the southeast ridge.

In three hours we ascended the lower easy section of ridge and camped at 5,100m. Next morning we left early for a light, fast attempt: no tent, only one rope, and one axe each. By sunrise we had roped up for the more difficult rock sections, where we either moved together or made 30m pitches. However, due to fresh snow the climbing was harder than expected, and after 10 hours we stopped at 6,000m to bivouac. Above this point a broad glaciated face leads to the top.

The sky was clear and the night cold, but poor conditions and deep snow meant that on the 20th we could only ascend at a rate of 100m per hour. After six hours we reached a large crevasse, and while skirting it Tomeu fell into another, hidden slot that ran at right angles. About 150m higher we came to another crevasse. This was much wider and we found it too risky to cross. We may have been no more than 150m below the top, but we turned around and managed to regain our tent. It was Cati's birthday.

We had no time for a second try, nor did we notice the devastating earthquake on the 25th as we trekked out. We learned about it at the end of our trip and can only encourage people to visit the country in order to aid its recovery and, if possible, collaborate with some of the NGOs working there on relief and reconstruction.

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Editor's note: Peak 4 was officially opened to climbers in 2003. Earlier, in September 1989, Andy Fanshaw and Ulrich Jessop climbed the southeast ridge with three bivouacs, the third—on the summit—made partly to aid acclimatization for Makalu. Close to the top they had great difficulties turning a large crevasse, which featured 10m of "utterly rotten snow." In 2010 the mountain was attempted by Georgian climbers, possibly via the southwest ridge. They reached 6,400m before heavy snow made conditions too dangerous to continue.

Images



Chamlang North (left) and Peak 4 showing the Mallorcan attempt up the southeast ridge.



The upper section of the southeast ridge of Peak 4 showing the Mallorcan high point.



On the lower rock section of the southeast ridge.



At the first bivouac on the ridge, looking southeast. Yaupa peaks on the left (climbed during a 1989 expedition), Tutse (Peak 6, 6,758m) on the right, and Kangchenjunga in far distance.

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