



AAC Publications

Sayan Mountains, Zvezdny, Northeast Face, Kosinusoyda

Russia, Siberia

I had long dreamed of climbing a direct route up the big northeast face of Zvezdny (2,265m), in the Ergaki massif of the Western Sayan, between the Hvostenko Route (2001, 6A) and Balezin Route (1997, 5B). (This peak is located at 52°49'45.88"N, 93°24'53.73"E.) After weighing the pros and cons, and listening to our coach, Valery Balezin, Nicholas Matyushin and I decided instead to try a more straightforward, though still logical, line on the left side of the face.

We left Krasnoyarsk, where we are both students at the university, in the evening of December 2. The roads were very icy, and it wasn't until 5 a.m. that we reached my parents' house in the village of Cheryomushki. We started our approach on the 4th, spending that night in our portaledge, hung from a tree in the forest. Moving our ca 100kg of equipment through blowing snow, we reached a good site for advanced base on the 7th, close to the northeast face. On the 8th we could see the face was covered in hoar frost.

At 4 a.m. on December 9 the wind seemed to be almost hurricane force, and we feared to venture outside the portaledge, but by 10 a.m. we realized that if we didn't start soon we would run out of time. We set off in improved conditions, climbed five pitches to the first snow terrace, then moved along it to the right for about four rope lengths to a place where we could erect the portaledge. Next day we managed to fix our two ropes on the difficult terrain above, and on the 11th we climbed to pitch 22 before stopping for the night. The 12th dawned sunny and windless, and we added six more pitches, climbing through overhangs, slabs, cubic meters of snow, and wide cracks choked with ice, almost reaching the summit ridge. On the 13th we crawled up the last bit of the southeast ridge through gale-force wind to reach the summit.

With beta provided by Ivan Temerev, we found the top anchor of his 2013 route (6A) and began a series of rappels down his line, reaching the bottom of the wall at 5:30 p.m., after which, in a blizzard, we attempted to locate our base camp, where we had left gas and food. Eventually we had to suspend our portaledge from a boulder, mix coffee with snow, eat this, and wait until morning, when we discovered we were only 100m from our cache. During our descent to the road, we camped again in the forest—the temperature was -25°C.

The height of our route, which we named Kosinusoyda, was 570m, but the climbing distance much longer, involving 29 pitches to the summit ridge. The overall steepness of the wall was 63°, and route was graded 5B, with free climbing up to around F5a/b and aid to A3+. Bolts were placed on all belays and occasionally used for aid.

Lindsay Griffin, with information from Alexander Zhigalov, Russia, and Elena Dmitrenko, Risk.ru

Images



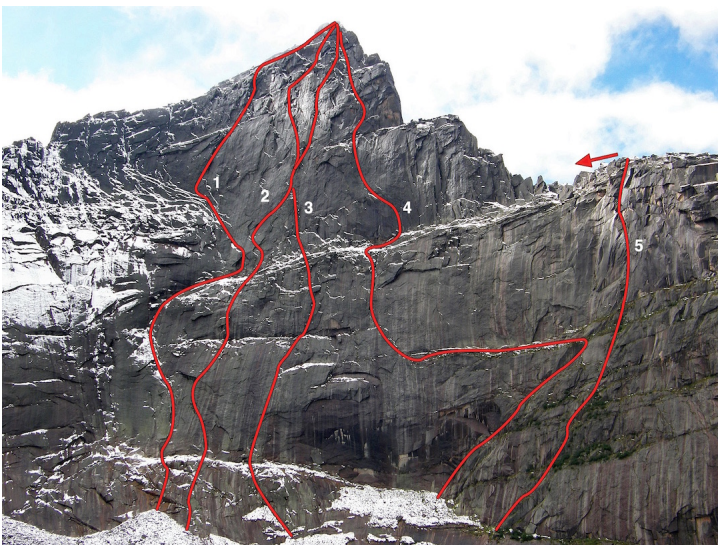
A thinly iced corner during day three on Zvszdiny.



Difficult iced slabs early on day three of the new route on Zvszdiny.



A difficult mixed traverse on the fourth day of the new route on Zvezdny.



The northeast face of Zvezdny seen in drier, more summerlike conditions than during the 2015 winter ascent, when it was plastered in snow and ice. (1) Kosinusoyda (2015, 5B). (2) Temerev (2013, 6A). (3) Hvostenko (2001, 6A). (4) Balezin (1997, 5B). (5) Balezin (2001, 5B).

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