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## **In Some Lost Place: The First Ascent of Nanga Parbat's Mazeno Ridge**

By Sandy Allan

**In Some Lost Place: The First Ascent of Nanga Parbat's Mazeno Ridge. Sandy Allan. Vertebrate Publishing (U.K.), 2015. 185 Pages. Hardcover, £24.**

This book is a compelling and straightforward account of the epic, 18-day first ascent of the Mazeno Ridge on Nanga Parbat (AAJ 2013). The 10-kilometer ridgeline was one of the great unclimbed features on an 8,000-meter peak and had been attempted in the 1990s by several expeditions that included experienced climbers such as Doug Scott, Voytek Kurtyka, and Erhard Loretan. Sandy Allan, along with his partner Rick Allen, participated in one of Scott's attempts, in 1995, and as Sandy writes, "It was then that the Mazeno first got under my skin." In 2004, Doug Chabot and I made the first ascent of the ridge from Mazeno Pass to the Mazeno Gap, where it intersects the Schell Route, but we didn't climb the rest of that 1976 route to the summit, because I was sick and the weather was poor. This was a route with a lot of history.

Sandy does a nice job explaining how he and Rick learned from the previous attempts to develop a strategy for the ridge in 2012. They decided to go with a larger team and more supplies, so they could stay on the route longer. To help provide horsepower for this approach, they invited three Sherpa friends to be part of the team. Sandy's description of how modern Sherpas can be equal partners on a difficult new route is enlightening to those who might view them primarily as load carriers on commercial mountains. The team used fixed ropes to get to 6,400 meters for acclimatization, but this ended up being such a small part of the overall effort that I don't believe it detracts from their alpine-style ascent. I enjoyed reading how they developed a plan that honored the spirit of the previous attempts but also worked for them.

Sandy expresses a level of comfort and even joy while spending a long time at extreme altitude on a route where it would be easy to get trapped by bad weather or snow conditions. His state of mind is in sharp contrast to that of many Himalayan climbers who believe that safety and success while climbing alpine style only comes from going light and fast. Reading Sandy's book made me wonder whether, if Doug and I had been more like Sandy and took an extra day at the Mazeno Gap to think about it, we might have been able to keep going. It reminds me there isn't a single formula for practicing our craft.

After the team completed the ridge, most of them made a summit attempt to around 7,900 meters, and then they all returned to high camp. Sandy and Rick decided to try again for the top while everyone else descended the Schell Route. Their experience in reaching the summit of Nanga Parbat and getting back down took them very close to the edge. It's a dangerous place to go, but maybe those are the kinds of experiences we seek.

– Steve Swenson

## Images



## Article Details

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